

A FURTHER COLONY OF *ANASIMYIA INTERPUNCTA*
HARRIS (DIPT.: SYRPHIDAE)
IN THE THAMES ESTUARY AREA

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The recent article by A. A. Allen on *Anasimyia interpuncta* Harris on the Thames marshes at Erith, Kent, (*Ent. Rec.* 97: 85-86), prompts me to report on a colony of this species at Rainham, South Essex during 1985. Credit for this discovery must go to my young friend Ian Wynne, whose determinations I was pleased to confirm. The site involved is a very small one, being a short stretch of the Ingrebourne River just south of the A.13 trunk road. I visited the site myself daily from 26th to 29th May 1985, and on each occasion found the species in evidence. Capture was another matter however, and whilst sweeping proved most un-productive, the best method seemed to be standing still on one spot amongst the reeds at the waters edge and swiftly netting each *Anasimyia* as it appeared. Subsequent visits during the first two weeks of June proved less productive however, with only a few worn individuals being noted up to the 6th.

Since some of my observations are at variance with those of Mr. Allen, some comments seem to be appropriate. Allen records the species well into June 1984, whilst my own observations during 1985 seem to confirm the statement in Stubbs and Falk (1983) that the flight period is May. However, 1985 could hardly be described as a typical year, with the cold and wet weather extending beyond the end of spring and on to the end of June! The fact that a few stragglers were indeed noted in the first week of June at the Rainham site however, may support Allen's observations, and clearly both sites would repay further examination during 1986. It would be interesting to read Allen's 1985 observations on the Erith colony in the pages of this journal.

Allen also notes this species in association with buttercups (*Ranunculus* spp.). At the time of my researches I was unaware of his observations, but I did carefully work all the flowers present, including a large number of buttercups, for hoverflies, and found no evidence of this species, (again the 1985 weather may have had some bearing on this). Indeed, I have been unable to locate the species anywhere other than amongst fairly dense stands of *Phragmites* at the very edge of the water which, at this point, is stationary.

Apparently suitable habitats exist 1.5 Km to the north-east at Ingrebourne Marsh and Berwick Pond, but here I could locate only *A. lineata* (Fabr.) and in lesser numbers *A. transfuga* (Linn.). North across the River Thames from the Kent colony lies Aveley Marsh,

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a Ministry of Defence area for which an entry permit is required. Again I could find no evidence of *A. interpuncta* here in the presence of similar habitat areas. I understand that Ian Wynne has however, located the species some 6 Km west of the Rainham site, in Barking, on land formerly managed as an ecology park. I have not seen this specimen, but there is no reason to doubt his identification. Again, the species was taken here in association with *Phragmites*.

Combining Ian Wynne's observations with my own, the Rainham colony would appear to have comprised some 70 to 80 individuals during 1985. The ratio of the sexes appears to have been in the order of one male to four females, which is itself of interest. A number of other hoverfly species were noted at the Rainham site, notably *A. lineata* (Fabr.), and *A. transfuga* (Linn.) in reasonable quantity, along with *A. contracta* Claussen & Torp sparingly. Among the other genera, *Chrysogaster hirtella* Loew, *Lejogaster metallina* (Fabr.) and *Platycheirus fulviventris* (Macquart) were much in evidence, along with *Parhelophilus versicolor* (Fabr.), *Myathropa florea* (Linn.), *Helophilus pendulus* Linn.) and several common species of *Eristalis*.

My observations on the habits of this species here were limited by the time available for study. It was noted at least between 0800 and 1830 hours, with no apparent peak of activity, although this could be a function of the sunshine during this period. One thing noted in particular was the apparent reluctance of this insect to fly any great distance, with both males and females restricting their flight activity to the cover of the reeds, occasionally venturing just above or around the edge of the plants. Not so *A. lineata*, the males of which were seen patrolling a stretch of riverside some 9 or 10 metres in length, always returning to the same resting place at regular intervals between flights. Females of this latter species were only rarely encountered amongst the reeds with *A. interpuncta*, but females of *A. transfuga* more frequently so.

No doubt there is much that can be learned from both the Erith and Rainham colonies of *A. interpuncta* and it is particularly unfortunate therefore that the latter site is likely to be "developed" for a supermarket store.

Reference

Stubbs, A. E. and Falk, S. J. 1983 *British Hoverflies*: BENHS (London).

[The apparent discrepancies between Mr. Plant's observations and my own must, I think, be due to either or (more probably) both of two circumstances: differing conditions at the sites, and weather differences between the two seasons. I have unfortunately not managed to re-visit the Erith site this summer for various reasons, but hope to do so next year. The discovery of *A. interpuncta*